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THE PLEASURES  
OF MELANCHOLY

J WARTON

1747

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THE  
PLEASURES  
OF  
MELANCHOLY.  
A P O E M.

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-----*Præcipe lugubres*  
*Cantus, Melpomene!*-----HOR.

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L O N D O N :

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( Price One Shilling. )



And the big hail in mingling storm descend  
 Upon his horrid brow. But when the skies  
 Unclouded shine, and thro' the blue serene  
 Pale Cynthia rolls her silver-axled car,  
 Then ever looking on the spangled vault  
 Raptur'd thou sit'st, while murmurs indistinct  
 Of distant billows sooth thy pensive ear  
 With hoarse and hollow sounds ; secure, self-blest,  
 Oft too thou listen'st to the wild uproar  
 Of fleets encount'ring, that in whispers low  
 Ascends the rocky summit, where thou dwell'st  
 Remote from man, conversing with the spheres.  
 O lead me, black-brow'd <sup>Queen</sup> ~~Eve~~, to solemn glooms  
 Cogenial with my soul, to cheerless shades,  
 To ruin'd seats, to twilight cells and bow'rs,  
 Where thoughtful *Melancholy* loves to muse,

Her fav'rite midnight haunts. The laughing scenes  
 Of purple Spring, where all the wanton train  
 Of Smiles and Graces seem to lead the dance  
 In sportive round, while from their hands they show'r  
 Ambrosial blooms and flow'rs, no longer charm ;  
 Tempe, no more I court thy balmy breeze,  
 Adieu green vales ! embroider'd meads adieu !

Beneath yon' ruin'd Abbey's moss-grown piles  
 Oft let me sit, at twilight hour of Eve,  
 Where thro' some western window the pale moon  
 Pours her long-levell'd rule of streaming light ;  
 While fullen sacred silence reigns around,  
 Save the lone Screech-owl's note, whose bow'r is built  
 Amid the mould'ring caverns dark and damp,  
 And the calm breeze, that rustles in the leaves



Of flaunting Ivy, that with mantle green  
 Invests some sacred tow'r. Or let me tread  
 It's neighb'ring walk of pines, where stray'd of old  
 The cloyster'd brothers : thro' the gloomy void  
 That far extends beneath their ample arch  
 As on I tread, religious horror wraps  
 My soul in dread repose. But when the world  
 Is clad in Midnight's raven-colour'd robe,  
 In hollow charnel let me watch the flame  
 Of taper dim, while airy voices talk  
 Along the glimm'ring walls, or ghostly shape  
 At distance seen, invites with beck'ning hand  
 My lonesome steps, thro' the far-winding vaults.  
 Nor undelightful is the solemn noon  
 Of night, when haply wakeful from my couch  
 I start : lo, all is motionless around !



Roars not the rushing wind, the sons of men  
 And every beast in mute oblivion lie ;  
 All Nature's hush'd in silence and in sleep.

O then how fearful is it to reflect,  
 That thro' the solitude of the still globe  
 No Being wakes but me ! 'till stealing sleep  
 My drooping temples baths in opiate dew :  
 Nor then let dreams, of wanton Folly born,  
 My senses lead thro' flowery paths of joy ;  
 But let the sacred Genius of the night  
 Such mystic visions send, as SPENSER saw,  
 When thro' bewild'ring Fancy's magic maze,  
 To the bright regions of the fairy world  
 Soar'd his creative mind : or MILTON knew,  
 When in abstracted thought he first conceiv'd

All heav'n in tumult, and the Seraphim  
Come tow'ring, arm'd in adamant and gold.

Let others love the Summer-ev'ning's smiles,  
As list'ning to some distant water-fall  
They mark the blushes of the streaky west:  
I choose the pale December's foggy glooms;  
Then, when the fullen shades of Ev'ning close,  
Where thro' the room a blindly-glimm'ring gleam  
The dying embers scatter, far remote  
From Mirth's mad shouts, that thro' the lighted roof  
Resound with festive echo, let me sit,  
Blest with the lowly cricket's drowsy dirge.  
Then let my contemplative thought explore  
This fleeting state of things, the vain delights,  
The fruitless toils, that still elude our search,



As thro' the wilderness of life we rove.  
 This sober hour of silence will unmask  
 False Folly's smiles, that like the dazzling spells  
 Of wily Comus, cheat th' unweeeting eye  
 With blear illusion, and persuade to drink  
 The charmed cup, that Reason's mintage fair  
 Unmoulds, and stamps the monster on the man.  
 Eager we taste, but in the luscious draught  
 Forget the pois'nous dregs that lurk beneath.

Few know that Elegance of soul refin'd,  
 Whose soft sensation feels a quicker joy  
 From Melancholy's scenes, than the dull pride  
 Of tasteless splendor and magnificence  
 Can e'er afford. Thus Eloise, whose mind  
 Had languish'd to the pangs of melting love,

More secret transport found, as on some tomb  
 Reclin'd she watch'd the tapers of the dead,  
 Or thro' the pillar'd isles, amid the shrines  
 Of imag'd saints, and intermingled graves,  
 Which scarce the story'd windows dim disclos'd,  
 Musing she wander'd ; than Cosmelia finds,  
 As thro' the Mall in filken pomp array'd,  
 She floats amid the gilded sons of dress,  
 And shines the fairest of th' assembled Belles.

When azure noon-tide cheers the dædal globe,  
 And the glad regent of the golden day  
 Rejoices in his bright meridian bow'r,  
 How oft my wishes ask the night's return,  
 That best befriends the melancholy mind !  
 Hail, sacred Night ! to thee my song I raise !



Sister of ebon-scepter'd Hecat, hail !  
 Whether in congregated clouds thou wrap'st  
 Thy viewless chariot, or with silver crown  
 Thy beaming head encirclest, ever hail !  
 What tho' beneath thy gloom the Lapland witch  
 Oft celebrates her moon-eclipsing rites ;  
 Tho' Murther wan, beneath thy shrouding shade  
 Oft calls her silent vot'ries to devise  
 Of blood and slaughter, while by one blue lamp  
 In secret conf'rence sits the list'ning band,  
 And start at each low wind, or wakeful sound ;  
 What tho' thy stay the Pilgrim curses oft,  
 As all benighted in Arabian wastes  
 He hears the howling wilderness resound  
 With roaming monsters, while on his hoar head  
 The black-descending tempest ceaseless beats ;

Yet more delightful to my pensive mind  
 Is thy return, than bloomy Morn's approach,  
 When from the portals of the saffron East  
 She sheds fresh roses and ambrosial dews.  
 Yet not ungrateful is the Morn's approach,  
 When dropping wet she comes, and clad in clouds,  
 While thro' the damp air scowls the peevish South,  
 And the dusk landschape rises dim to view.  
 Th' afflicted songsters of the sadden'd groves  
 Hail not the fullen gloom, but silent droop ;  
 The waving elms, that rang'd in thick array,  
 Enclose with stately row some rural hall,  
 Are mute, nor echo with the clamors hoarse  
 Of rooks rejoicing on their hoary boughs :  
 While to the shed the dripping poultry croud,  
 A mournful train : secure the village-hind



Hangs o'er the crackling blaze, nor tempts the storm ;  
 Rings not the high wood with enliv'ning shouts  
 Of early hunter : all is silence drear ;  
 And deepest sadness wraps the face of things.

Thro' POPE's soft song tho' all the Graces breath,  
 And happiest art adorn his Attic page ;  
 Yet does my mind with sweeter transport glow,  
 As at the foot of some hoar oak reclin'd,  
 In magic SPENSER's wildly-warbled song  
 I see deserted Una wander wide  
 Thro' wasteful solitudes, and lurid heaths,  
 Weary, forlorn, than when the † fated Fair,  
 Upon the bosom bright of silver Thames,  
 Launches in all the lustre of Brocade,

† Belinda. Vid. *Rape of the Lock*.

Amid the splendors of the laughing Sun.  
 The gay description palls upon the sense,  
 And coldly strikes the mind with feeble bliss.

O wrap me then in shades of darksome pine,  
 Bear me to caves by desolation brown,  
 To dusky vales, and hermit-haunted rocks !  
 And hark, methinks resounding from the gloom  
 The voice of Melancholy strikes mine ear ;  
 “ Come, leave the busy trifles of vain life,  
 “ And let these twilight mansions teach thy mind  
 “ The Joys of Musing, and of solemn Thought.”

Ye youths of Albion's beauty-blooming isle,  
 Whose brows have worn the wreath of luckless love,  
 Is there a pleasure like the pensive mood,

Whose



Whose magic wont to sooth your soften'd souls?

O tell how rapt'rous is the deep-felt bliss

To melt to Melody's assuasive voice,

Careless to stray the midnight mead along,

And pour your sorrows to the pitying moon,

Oft interrupted by the Bird of Woe!

To muse by margin of romantic stream,

To fly to solitudes, and there forget

The solemn dulness of the tedious world,

'Till in abstracted dreams of fancy lost,

Eager you snatch the visionary fair,

And on the phantom feast your cheated gaze!

Sudden you start ---- th' imagin'd joys recede,

The same sad prospect opens on your sense;

And nought is seen but deep-extended trees

In hollow rows, and your awaken'd ear

Again

Again attends the neighb'ring fountain's sound.  
 These are delights that absence drear has made  
 Familiar to my soul, er'e since the form  
 Of young Sapphira, beauteous as the Spring,  
 When from her vi'let-woven couch awak'd  
 By frolic Zephyr's hand, her tender cheek  
 Graceful she lifts, and blushing from her bow'r,  
 Issues to cloath in gladsome-glitt'ring green  
 The genial globe, first met my dazled sight.  
 These are delights unknown to minds profane,  
 And which alone the pensive soul can taste.

The taper'd choir, at midnight hour of Pray'r,  
 Oft let me tread, while to th' according voice  
 The many-sounding organ peals on high,  
 In full-voic'd chorus thro' th' embowed roof ;

'Till



'Till all my soul is bath'd in ecstasies,  
 And lap'd in Paradise. Or let me sit  
 Far in some distant isle of the deep dome,  
 There lonesome listen to the solemn sounds,  
 Which, as they lengthen thro' the Gothic vaults,  
 In hollow murmurs reach my ravish'd ear.

Nor let me fail to cultivate my mind  
 With the soft thrillings of the tragic Muse,  
 Divine Melpomene, sweet Pity's nurse,  
 Queen of the stately step, and flowing pall.  
 Now let Monimia mourn with streaming eyes  
 Her joys incestuous, and polluted love:  
 Now let Calista dye the desperate steel  
 Within her bosom, for lost innocence,  
 Unable to behold a father weep.

Or Jaffair kneel for one forgiving look ;  
 Nor feldom let the Moor on Desdemone  
 Pour the misguided threats of jealous rage.  
 By soft degrees the manly torrent steals  
 From my swollen eyes, and at a brother's woe  
 My big heart melts in sympathizing tears.

What are the splendors of the gaudy court,  
 It's tinsel trappings, and it's pageant pomps?  
 To me far happier seems the banish'd Lord  
 Amid Siberia's unrejoycing wilds  
 Who pines all lonesome, in the chambers hoar  
 Of some high castle shut, whose windows dim  
 In distant ken discover trackless plains,  
 Where Winter ever drives his icy car ;  
 While still repeated objects of his view,



The gloomy battlements, and ivied tow'rs  
 That crown the solitary dome, arise ;  
 While from the topmost turret the slow clock  
 Far heard along th' inhospitable wastes  
 With sad-returning chime, awakes new grief ;  
 Than is the Satrap whom he left behind  
 In Moscow's regal palaces, to drown  
 In ease and luxury the laughing hours.

Illustrious objects strike the gazer's mind  
 With feeble bliss, and but allure the sight,  
 Nor rouse with impulse quick the feeling heart.  
 Thus seen by shepherd from Hymettus' brow,  
 What painted landscapes spread their charms beneath ?  
 Here palmy groves, amid whose umbrage green  
 Th' unfading olive lifts her silver head,

Resounding once with Plato's voice, arise :  
 Here vine-clad hills unfold their purple stores,  
 Here fertile vales their level lap expand,  
 Amid whose beauties glistening Athens tow'rs.  
 Tho' thro' the graceful seats Ilissus roll  
 His sage-inspiring flood, whose fabled banks  
 The spreading laurel shades, tho' roseate Morn  
 Pour all her splendors on th' empurpled scene,  
 Yet feels the musing Hermit truer joys,  
 As from the cliff that o'er his cavern hangs,  
 He views the piles of fall'n Persepolis  
 In deep arrangement hide the darksome plain.  
 Unbounded waste ! the mould'ring Obelisk  
 Here, like a blasted oak, ascends the clouds ;  
 Here Parian domes their vaulted halls disclose  
 Horrid with thorn, where lurks the secret thief,

Whence



Whence flits the twilight-loving bat at eve,  
 And the deaf adder wreaths her spotted train,  
 The dwellings once of Elegance and Art.  
 Here temples rise, amid whose hallow'd bounds  
 Spires the black pine, while thro' the naked street,  
 Haunt of the trade-ful merchant, springs the grass :  
 Here columns heap'd on prostrate columns, torn  
 From their firm base, encrease the mould'ring mass.  
 Far as the sight can pierce, appear the spoils  
 Of sunk magnificence : a blended scene  
 Of moles, fanes, arches, domes, and palaces,  
 Where, with his brother horror, ruin sits.

O come then, *Melancholy*, queen of thought,  
 O come with faintly look and steadfast step,  
 From forth thy cave embower'd with mournful yew,  
 Where



Where ever to the curfew's solemn sound  
 Lift'ning thou sitt'st, and with thy cypress bind  
 Thy votary's hair, and seal him for thy son.  
 But never let Euphrosyne beguile  
 With toys of wanton mirth my fixed mind,  
 Nor with her primrose garlands strew my paths.  
 What tho' with her the dimpled Hebe dwells,  
 With young-ey'd Pleasure, and the loose-rob'd Joy;  
 Tho' Venus, mother of the Smiles and Loves,  
 And Bacchus, ivy-crown'd, in myrtle bow'r  
 With her in dance fantastic beat the ground :  
 What tho' 'tis her's to calm the blue serene,  
 And at her presence mild the low'ring clouds  
 Disperse in air, and o'er the face of heav'n  
 New day diffusive glows at her approach ;  
 Yet are these joys that Melancholy gives,

By Contemplation taught, her sister sage,  
Than all her witless revels happier far.

Then ever, beauteous Contemplation, hail!  
From thee began, auspicious maid, my song,  
With thee shall end : for thou art fairer far  
Than are the nymphs of Cirrha's mossy grot ;  
To loftier rapture thou canst wake the thought,  
Than all the fabling Poet's boasted pow'rs.  
Hail, queen divine ! whom, as tradition tells,  
Once in his ev'ning-walk a Druid found  
Far in a hollow glade of Mona's woods,  
And piteous bore with hospitable hand  
To the close shelter of his oaken bow'r.  
There soon the Sage admiring mark'd the dawn  
Of solemn Musing in thy pensive thought ;



For when a smiling babe, you lov'd to lie  
 Oft deeply list'ning to the rapid roar  
 Of wood-hung Meinai, stream of Druids old,  
 That lav'd his hallow'd haunt with dashing wave.

F I N I S.







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